

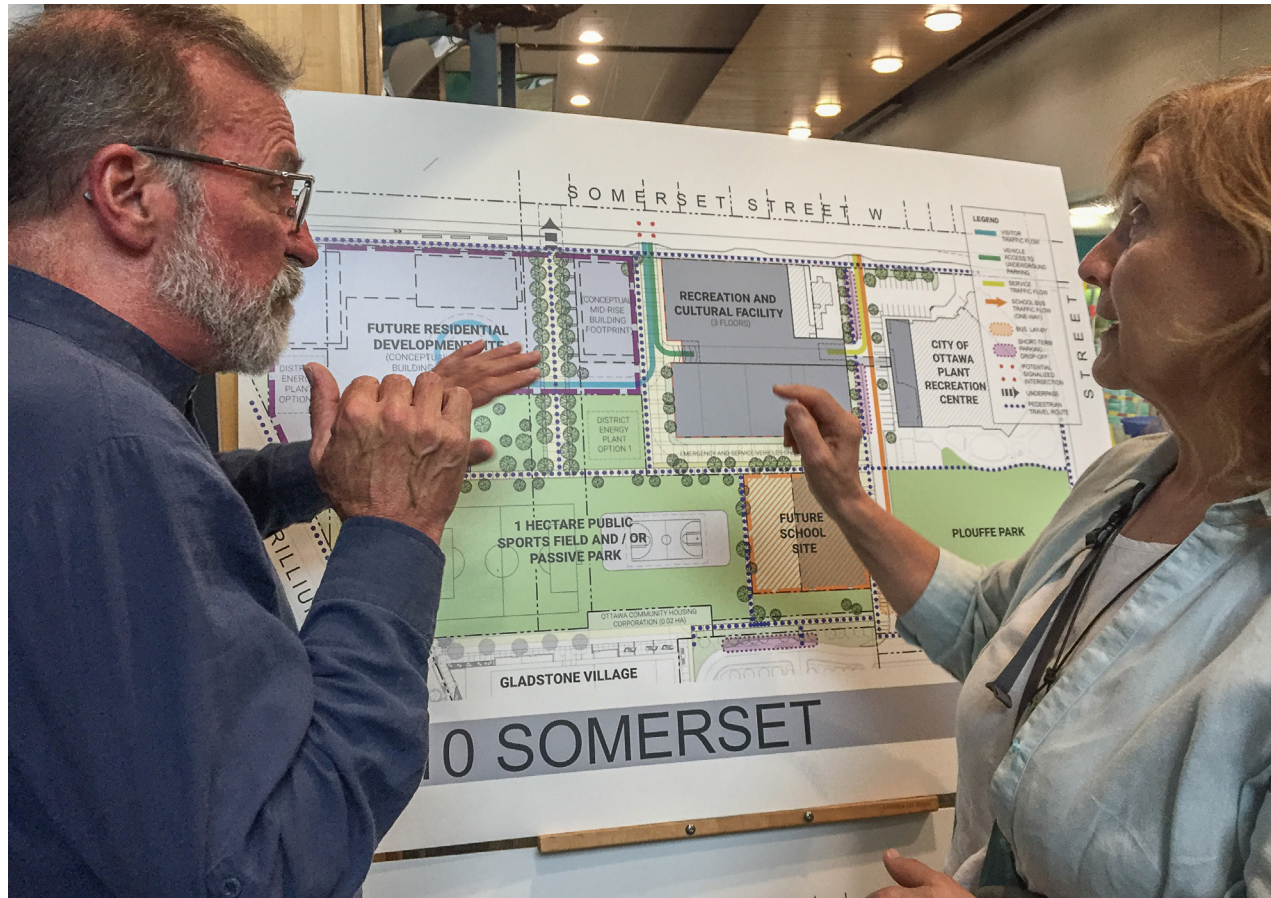


Why concrete giants are in a soccer field, 5

The Tulip Festival is an example of peace, 9

Your community newspaper

# THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ



Kevin Wherry, the city's manager of Parks & Facilities Planning, answers questions from DCA board member Debbie Barton about the revised proposal for the 1010 Somerset project. It places the new French school between Plouffe Park and new greenspace. ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

## Plouffe Park preserved in city's revised 1010 Somerset project

Alayne McGregor

Plouffe Park will be preserved in the revised City of Ottawa concept plan for the empty area near Somerset and Preston.

The new 1010 Somerset plan places the new École Louise Arbour in the middle of the development, between Plouffe Park to the east and the new one-hectare sports field to the west. The French-language public school will be just north of the new Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) Gladstone Village development.

A three-storey recreational and cultural facility will be built on Somerset Street West, just west of the current Plant Recreation Centre. Plans also include a childcare facility, an artists' hub, and a district energy plant.

Further west on Somerset residential buildings are planned, possibly also replacing the current commercial buildings there. The concept plan shows both a high-rise and a mid-rise building.

The new plan can be seen at <https://engage.ottawa.ca/1010-somerset>. The city promises a virtual engagement session over Zoom for the public to comment on the new plan, but at press time had not yet given dates or how to register.

It went live May 15, just as the previous issue of *The BUZZ* was being delivered by our printer. The city had presented the plan earlier to stakeholders, including the École Louise Arbour school council and the P4X Coalition of community associations for their comments.

Local residents also had a chance to ask questions of Kevin Wherry, the city's manager of Parks & Facilities Planning, in an informal session May 25 after the Dalhousie Community Association AGM.

The initial draft of the plan, released last June, placed the new school in the current location of Plouffe Park, with the park lost to

community use for almost a decade. This prompted strong opposition; 1,260 people commented on the [Engage Ottawa page](https://engage.ottawa.ca).

The first plan was eventually withdrawn, and city staff were told to conduct a full review with the issues raised by residents taken into consideration.

Somerset Ward Councillor Ariel Troster praised the revised plan as "quite an elegant solution."

"After a year of really thoughtful intense public consultation, I am thrilled to see a new plan that I think represents the best possible plan for this site for the community at large and also for the children who will be attending Louise Arbour school."

She said she thought the plan met "as many of the concerns as possible. ... It's a relatively small piece of land with a huge number of demands on it."

### School access biggest issue

On the Engage Ottawa page, staff said that there were "insurmountable functional and operational issues with placing all buildings in the north half of the site to preserve the park corridor in the southern half."

Instead, the new school will be placed between the current Plouffe Park and the new sports field. Troster said this would allow the students to use the park at recess, and use gyms in the recreation centre.

A new lane from Somerset to Oak Street will allow bus and two-way car traffic from Somerset south to the school. From the school south to Oak Street, it is intended to be one-way southbound for school bus and ParaTranspo only.

continued on page 3 "1010"

## Plan calls for increasing downtown population by 54%

Alayne McGregor

The Ottawa Board of Trade is proposing an action plan to restore downtown that could increase the number of residents in Centretown/Dalhousie, Lowertown, and Sandy Hill by 54 percent.

Its plan, called *Living Capital: An Agenda for Aligned Action*, was prepared in conjunction with the Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) and released May 22. It builds on the work of the previous Downtown Ottawa Revitalization Task Force, which released its report in January.

Its aim is to make downtown affordable, walkable, and amenity-rich, less dependent on the federal government for jobs, and safe and secure for workers, residents, visitors, and vulnerable people.

Four "big moves" form the core of the plan:

- adding 40,000 new residents to downtown by 2034, a 54 percent increase;
- attracting 50,000 jobs to downtown by 2034;
- establishing a joint \$500 million fund to kick-start action, with money from government, institutional, and private sector sources;
- focusing on "catalytic anchors" for downtown including investment in the Sparks Street and ByWard Market public realms, and creation of a business incubation district and an arts/culture corridor.

It identifies downtown as including Lowertown and Sandy Hill as well as Centretown/Dalhousie, all of which are

already more densely populated than average. It estimates that these areas include 74,000 people. City statistics show that Somerset Ward (Centretown/Dalhousie) had 47,960 residents at the end of 2023.

Adding residents will make downtown become "a truly daytime and nighttime community," the plan says, with some residents working downtown and some commuting to suburban jobs.

More residents living downtown will "generate a higher return than simply absorbing the current office stock in a 'return-to-normal' scenario," it argues.

It also recommends supporting small businesses by promoting retail on ground floors, construction mitigation, and providing data to track and link businesses with opportunities.

A business incubation district in the area bounded by Sparks, Bay, Gloucester, and Elgin Streets could diversify and drive the downtown economy, it says. The district could allow post-secondary and government research institutions, start-ups, cultural organizations, design community, Indigenous organizations, and established companies to collaborate and innovate.

The plan has a short time frame with even the long term being defined as three years out. Immediate actions identified in its implementation plan include evaluating progress on housing, transit, homelessness, mental health, and addiction, as well as getting funding for the plan.

The predominance of federal buildings downtown "for years one of our greatest assets ... is now one of our most challenging liabilities," the plan says. It calls on the federal government to rethink how these buildings are used and in particular convert many to housing.

Addressing OC Transpo's continuing deficit, it says federal and provincial governments should provide transit gap funding, incentivize transit and boost ridership in low-use periods, institute employee transit passes, build the Gatineau-Ottawa tramway, and invest in active transportation. It estimates its overall plan of adding more residents and jobs could add 15,000 to 20,000 new transit riders.

A pilot study to convert one-way streets to two-way in key areas of downtown could enhance commercial opportunities and increase public safety and comfort for pedestrians, it says.

It also calls on all levels of government to fund programs to address homelessness, mental health and addictions challenges. It recommends boosting supports including emergency and permanent affordable housing, community health centres, transitional housing supports, and necessary wrap around services.

More amenities are needed downtown to meet the daily needs of residents – schools, groceries, social services, health care, jobs, active recreation, culture and entertainment – which will not

continued on page 5 "Better"

The response: Parents happy, P4X looking for changes: p. 7



June 14, 2024 — Vol. 29, No. 6

# THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ

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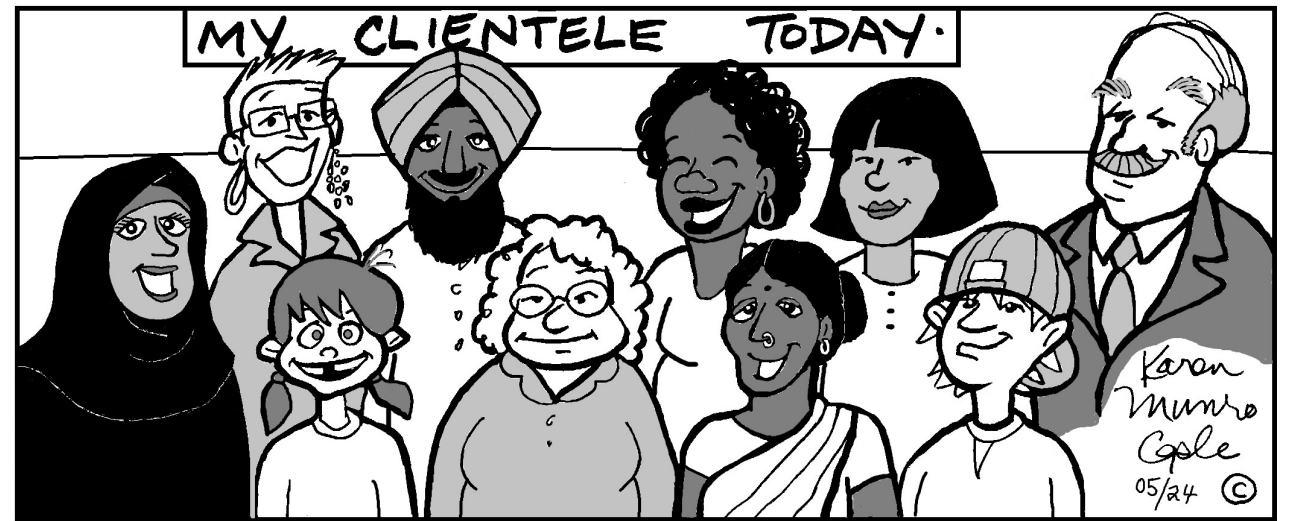
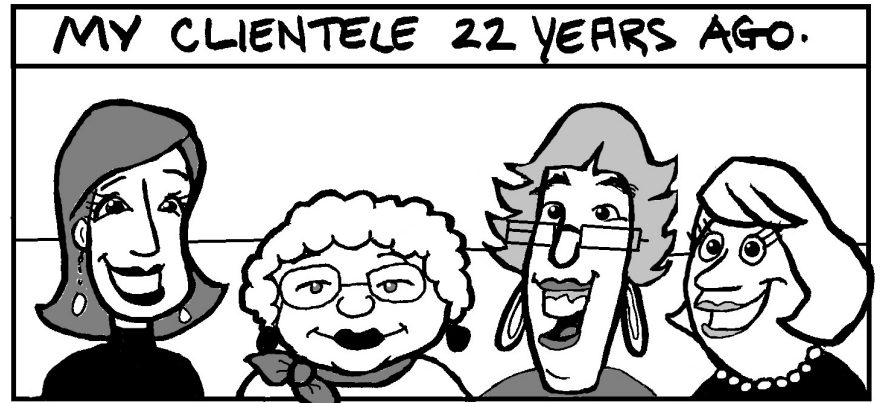
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## Adventures from Karen's Clinic, by Karen Munro-Caple



## News shorts

### The BUZZ is on vacation

The BUZZ takes its regular summer break next month. We'll be back on August 23.

Interested in contributing an article or photos, or buying an ad? The deadline is August 12.

### Province changes Heritage Register rules - again

The Ontario government has given the city two more years to designate properties on the city's Heritage Register.

The just-passed Bill 200, *The Homeowner Protection Act*, changed the deadline for designating or removing properties from the city's Heritage Register to January 1, 2027, instead of 2025.

However, it also has removed a loophole which the city had been using to protect properties it didn't have time to designate. The previous Bill 23 had said that any properties on the register left undesignated in 2025 would not be able to be added back for five years. The city had responded by proactively removing properties from the register this year with the intention of adding them back in 2025.

Being on the Heritage Register provides interim protection from demolition for properties of cultural heritage value or interest which have not been designated (a higher level of protection).

But the new Bill 200 says that any property on the register as of January 1, 2023 that was then later removed and not designated may not be added back for five years.

City heritage staff have been rapidly moving to designate their highest-priority properties on the register this year, as well as removing properties. This change will likely mean a longer time for

this designation process, but an end to removals.

It will also mean that properties recently removed in the western half of Somerset Ward cannot be protected on the register for another five years, although they could be designated.

### CCOC's 50th birthday party

On Saturday, July 27, the Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation (CCOC) will hold a celebration to mark its 50th year of providing affordable housing to Ottawa residents.

All are invited to the party at 170 Booth Street – not just CCOC tenants. From 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., there will be a community BBQ, a drag performance, speeches, and cake, and a chance to dunk

the CCOC executive director in a dunk tank.

Go to [centretownbuzz.ca](http://centretownbuzz.ca) to read a profile of CCOC and its influence on Centretown.

### Ottawa Urbanism Book Club

The Ottawa Urbanism Book Club is continuing over the summer. Its next meeting will be held Wednesday, July 31, at 7:15 p.m. at McNabb Community Centre, 180 Percy Street at Gladstone. To be discussed: *Killed by a Traffic Engineer* by Wes Marshall.

### Open houses for hospital-LRT connection

Have more questions on the long trek from the Dow's Lake LRT station to the new Ottawa Hospital location on Carling? Two open houses are being offered to look at

the plans for that connection.

On June 24 is a virtual open house, with a presentation and Q&A session, from 6 to 8:30 p.m. On June 25 an in-person open house will be held at Tom Brown arena (141 Bayview Station Rd.) with display boards and staff to answer questions. More info and to register for the June 24 session: <https://www.ottawa.ca/hospitalconnection>

### Italian Week Ottawa

This is the grand finale weekend of the Ottawa Italian Festival, with dancing, comedy, music, magic shows and more outdoor events along Preston Street, and a bike race on Sunday, June 16. See [italianweekottawa.ca/event/grand-finale-week-end-2024/](http://italianweekottawa.ca/event/grand-finale-week-end-2024/) for the schedule.

## Letter: The history behind the street names

I am writing with regard to Marit Quist-Corbett's article in the April *Centretown BUZZ* "First person: Adding up all the quirky numbers in Centretown."

In the article, the author states: "We have a Flora and Florence Street three blocks apart. What genius thought that up?" Perhaps a wee bit of history will help explain the matter.

In the 1860s, the Town of Ottawa's southern boundary was what is now Gladstone Avenue. Florence Street was located in the Town of Ottawa.

The land south of Gladstone, from the Rideau Canal to Bronson Avenue, was owned by William and Catherine Stewart. The Stewart family estate was called Appin Place and stood where the present Museum of Nature is located. William Stewart represented Bytown in the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada from 1844 to 1847. In 1871, Catherine Stewart had their land surveyed and divided into lots for development and this new village was named Stewarton.

All of the streets of Stewarton were named after Catherine and her children. The east-west streets were: Ann Street (later renamed Gladstone Avenue), McLeod Street, Flora Street, Archibald Street (later renamed Arlington), Catherine Street, and Isabella Street. The north-south streets were named

Hugh, Frank, Williamina, and Mina. These north-south streets were all renamed over time and are now known as: Kent, Lyon, Bay, and Percy Streets.

Stewarton was annexed by the Town of Ottawa on January 1, 1889, and at that time, had a population of 400 people. There is little remaining evidence of the existence of Stewarton, with the exception of the cornerstone of the United Church at Bank and Argyle, which identified it as the Stewarton United Church.

Also of note, McLeod Stewart, for whom McLeod Street is named, served as mayor of Ottawa from 1887 to 1888.

As for the quirky street numbering, it is partly to do with the length of the street. McLeod Street runs from the Rideau Canal to Bronson with numbering beginning at the Canal, whereas Flora Street runs from Bank to Bronson (with numbering beginning at Bank). This is why the numbers of the same city blocks of Flora and McLeod do not "align". The missing 30 numbers on Flora Street are likely due to the widening of Kent Street, which resulted in the removal of dwellings.

And now you know the rest of the story.

Ron McTiernan





Suggest how to animate the Queen Elizabeth Driveway at a meeting June 17. NEIL SARAVANAMUTTOO/THE BUZZ

## Our chance to make the QED sparkle!

Neil Saravanamuttoo

People bring spaces to life. And one of the best spaces in the city is the Queen Elizabeth Driveway.

Starting in early July, the National Capital Commission will close the QED north of Pretoria to cars 24/7. With a full road closure for the months of July and August, the NCC is committed to animating the space so that it becomes much more than just a closed road.

They will keep room for bikes, pedestrians, scooters, wheelchairs and other active users. But there will also be room for all sorts of new ways to use the closed road.

This summer on the QED, we might see small concerts on the roadway. Or chalk drawing activities. Or silent discos. Or mini festivals.

Local groups have been asking the NCC to let the community help bring this space to life. There are a number of small events that any one of us might be willing to put on. For example, I'd like to take my badminton net and set it up on a grassy patch for anyone to use. I've talked to members of an orchestra who want to bring their instruments down for an impromptu concert.

All we need from the NCC is the permis-

sion to use the space, a system for community groups to book a spot, and some sort of blanket insurance coverage provided by the NCC. With those essentials in place, we can invite the community to bring forward their ideas, roll up their sleeves, and bring this road to life.

To kickstart a community engagement, Parkways for People and the Centretown Community Association will be hosting a public discussion on Zoom to hear your ideas for QED animation. The online event will kick off with some thoughts from the two host organizations, hear how the City of Montreal has been pedestrianizing its streets, and have the NCC share some of its plans for the summer.

The floor will then be opened up to the public to hear your thoughts and comments about how we can make the QED a true place for people.

**Please join the community discussion on Monday, June 17, at 7 p.m. on Zoom.** We're looking forward to hearing your ideas on how we can best help make the Queen Elizabeth Driveway sparkle this summer.

Register online at [qed2024.eventbrite.ca](https://qed2024.eventbrite.ca).

## 1010 concept plan to be approved this fall

continued from page 1

The plan also includes a drop-off area for parents on Oak Street which staff say will minimize "traffic impacts in the area."

### Next steps

The next step in the process will be an amendment to the city's Official Plan to support the concept plan and federal government requirements. Troster expected that by the end of 2024 or early 2025, followed by site plan approval for different sections of the project. She said the top priority was approval for the school location and access, so the French public school board could go ahead with its planning.

Troster said there would continue to be consultation on the detailed plans for the recreation centre, park/greenspace, housing, and site access. The concept plan will determine where the elements are placed, she said, "but everything else can be worked out in detailed design. And there will be

detailed consultation, constant consultation for every component. The parents will be working with the school board to design the school that they want."

### In the works for years

The city bought the land – adjoining LRT Line 2 from Somerset Street West to Gladstone – from the federal government in 2021 in an agreement that required that 70 percent of the site be allocated to "public uses" and that 150 units of affordable housing and 150 units of market-rate housing be built there. The land had previously contained federal storage and warehouses.

OCH was allocated the southern part of the tract for Gladstone Village, which will eventually include 1,100 new homes. Phase 1 near Oak Street is currently under construction.

The city's Corso Italia Secondary Plan, approved in 2021, envisioned the northern half including a new 1.2 ha sports field, improved rec-

reation facilities, affordable housing, and the new school building (replacing the current old and inadequate school facilities on Beech Street).

### Other issues

Plouffe Park is a storm-water/flood retention basin to handle overflows during heavy thunderstorms. Wherry told *The BUZZ* that this would not prevent it from becoming a park with benches and trees and even possibly a gazebo.

It's not yet clear whether the primary target audience for the new recreation facility would be local residents or people from across Ottawa.

With many new developments now underway in Dalhousie or over the bridge in Hintonburg, Troster expected "in the range of 10,000 new residents moving into the neighbourhood" in the next decade.

Dalhousie is already the neighbourhood with the lowest proportion of greenspace per capita in the National Capital Region, she said.

## CCHC throws 55th birthday party

Rachel Carmichael Campbell, Centretown Community Health Centre

This year is the 55th anniversary of Centretown Community Health Centre (CCHC).

On Tuesday, June 25, we're holding a celebration block party at 420 Cooper Street between 3 and 6 p.m. All are welcome! We are offering free food and drinks, and will have yard games, a photo booth, drag story time, and more! It will also be followed by our Annual General Meeting for those interested.

Here's a little run-down of the last 55 years of CCHC...

- The organization started as 'The Drop-In Centre', in a broom closet at the YWCA/YMCA in 1969 and was open one day a week. It developed in response to growing drug use among transient adolescents and younger adults.

- The name was changed to the Ottawa Street Clinic in 1970 and moved to Lewis Street. The clinic was based on the belief that "every person has the right to stay healthy and that when ill, they receive the quickest and cheapest health care possible." It was funded through private donations, organizations, and the local municipal government.

- The clinic grew to employ full-time family doctors, offer birth control information, social and emotional counselling, nutrition counselling, and a 24-hour emergency assistance call centre. Over the years, funding fluctuated and there were times that individuals donated time and money, staff lived on unemployment insurance, and many people worked without pay.

- By the mid-1970s, the clinic added more programs to meet the increasing demands of the community including additional counselling, health teaching, nutrition, home visits, contraceptive counselling, pregnancy health services, and abortion counselling.

- In the early 1980s, CCHC officially became the Centretown Community Health

Centre, became a founding member of the association of Ontario Community Health Centres, and received hard-won sustainable funding from the provincial government.

- CCHC grew and moved to our current location on Cooper Street in 1999.

- Through the early 2000s, programs developed to what they are today, with a continued emphasis on interdisciplinary teams working to support clients. We provide social supports for people from all walks of life, with an emphasis on the needs of people who might otherwise experience barriers to health: 2SLGBTQIA+ folks, families, seniors, newcomers and refugees, people impacted by mental health and/or substance use, people who are street involved, and people with disabilities.

- Coming soon is the innovative trial project, ANCHOR, a 24/7 crisis line for folks experiencing mental health or substance use crises. Launch date is August 15 in the area between the Ottawa River to the north, the Rideau Canal to the east, Highway 417 to the south, and Preston Street to the west.

CCHC is one of the oldest community health centres in the province and one of the first to develop in the Ottawa area.

We have not had a base operating budget increase since 2011, and we have found creative ways to meet the growing demands of our community. Despite this, we still need public support to pressure the government to fund our work and match the value and savings that we bring to the health system and our communities.

The story of CCHC is one of flexibility and perseverance. We are struggling through a period of increasing costs, inequality, and overloaded systems. This is an opportunity to reflect by looking at the service organizations dotted around our neighbourhood and think of the individuals and collectives who have worked to help our communities over the years.

CCHC, 55 years and counting!



**New Zoning By-law**  
Nouveau règlement de zonage



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*Consultez le projet de révision du nouveau règlement de zonage d'Ottawa.*



SCAN ME



SCANNE-MOI





# World Exchange Plaza to begin reopening this summer/fall

John Shand

After years of anticipation, the new World Exchange Plaza (WEP) is rapidly approaching completion with some stores opening this summer.

“We are excited to showcase these new amenities to our tenants and guests and look forward to the unique and engaging programming that will be taking place in these spaces,” says WEP General Manager Tracey Larocque.

Located at 45 O’Connor Street, steps away from Parliament Hill, the WEP spans an entire city block. It consists of two towers joined by a mall plus an outdoor plaza – and hosts offices as well as many retail amenities and services. But a wide array of those amenities have remained closed since renovations began.

With interior demolition well underway by fall of 2021 and plaza construction in summer of 2022, the opening of the new WEP has

been highly anticipated by both Centretown residents and downtown Ottawa workers.

Renovations are “largely complete,” Larocque told *The BUZZ*. Finishing touches, now underway, will be completed by fall 2024.

However, this summer, several vendors in the food court will open and begin serving customers. The tenant amenity lounge, with a boutique fitness centre and conference facilities, is scheduled to open in September.

The revamped outdoor space is arguably the most anticipated aspect of the renovation. According to the plans on the website, the plaza will host cultural events, concerts, and group fitness. Equipped with ample seating and a stage for performances, it will feature greenery and contemporary multicoloured tents stretching across the plaza for decoration.

Larocque said the WEP team is planning a number of opening activities in the summer/fall “to showcase the amazing new amenities.

“Once the renovations are complete, the



The plaza in front of the World Exchange Plaza is almost finished renovation. ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

team will be hosting weekly concerts and other exciting events in the outdoor plaza.”

The new WEP is managed by QuadReal Property Group, while the architectural vision was brought to life by Ottawa-based Chmiel Architects.

The ground floor retail has been redesigned, and the food court has been provided with abundant natural light. According to the plans on the website, the new modern design incorporates wood elements to craft architectural motifs that contrast with a white backdrop.

The new WEP also includes a new energy management plan with environmental certifications such as LEED EBOM Platinum, BOMA BEST Platinum certification, and Energy Star. By 2040, QuadReal Property Group has committed to achieving net zero

emissions in all of their Canadian offices.

The indoor space is characterized by a blend of sharp corners and circles, with openness added through the high ceilings in the area. The food court will have a diversity of food vendors and ample seating options including more casual configurations, and will have a direct view of the renovated outdoor plaza.

Larocque is confident that Centretown residents will embrace the new WEP, anticipating that it will foster community connections through its revitalized retail and outdoor spaces.

“With the redesigned food court and outdoor plaza, downtown Ottawa residents will enjoy fresh dining choices and opportunities to socialize with friends and coworkers throughout the day.”

## Justine Bell

School Trustee  
Zone 10 Somerset

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### Questions?

### REACH OUT!

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## Preston bridge to roll into place soon

Alayne McGregor

Sometime this summer, two very large concrete structures will shed their girder overcoats and make a stately procession onto Preston Street.

The two structures, now sitting in a temporarily repurposed soccer field off Preston beside the Adult High School, will form the new Queensway bridge over Preston. They are the last of five midtown bridge pairs to be replaced.

Built in 1962, the Preston bridge is a “rigid frame” bridge, with the walls and road bed all one concrete structure. To replace it will be a Thursday-to-Monday operation on a date this summer which has not yet been announced.

The current bridge will be demolished in place and the rubble removed, and then the two halves of the new bridge will be rolled into place by rubber-wheeled self-propelled modular transporters (SPMTs).

The new bridges each weigh 1200 to 1600 tonnes, said Frank Vanderlaan, the area manager for Highway Engineering for the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario. A temporary concrete foundation had to be built in the soccer field to support their weight as they were being built.

“The beauty of it is you can just drive those SPMTs right underneath it and lift up that whole structure and then drive it away,” Vanderlaan said.

He said the weight wasn’t a constraint because as many modules could be added as necessary for the load. However, telephone poles, traffic signals, and other obstacles may have to be temporarily moved if they are in

the SPMTs’ path.

For the midtown bridges, he said, MTO was lucky to have been able to find available sites in which to built the replacement bridges, going so far as to buy old school board office building near Bronson for that site, and negotiating with Ottawa Community Housing to work in the area where it will be building phase III of Mosaiq.

For MTO’s next four bridge replacements in Hintonburg, he said, there aren’t any obvious staging areas.

Vanderlaan said the new midtown bridges will have a service life of 75 years, as compared to the previous 50 years. He attributed this to advances in construction over the years, for example, using stainless steel rebar. Building the replacements all at once in an isolated area also produces a better quality product and is safer for the workers.

Preston Street has already been narrowed to work on the subsurface foundations on which the new bridge will sit. Starting June 20, lanes will be closed from Young Street to Saint Anthony Street, to reopen later in the summer.

Preston Street will be closed for a total of three weeks before and after the bridge replacement this summer. St. Anthony Street will be closed during the actual move.

When Preston Street is closed, motor vehicles will be detoured via Gladstone, Bronson, and Carling. Pedestrians and cyclists will travel west on Gladstone, turn south onto the Trillium multi-use pathway, and east on George Street West.

Several Queensway on- and off-ramps a city briefing on the bylaw and would be discussing it further in its Planning Committee.

One important issue is whether affordable housing projects should be allowed exemptions to height limits, she said. “Affordable housing [budget] numbers are not working right now, but if they can get a little additional height, maybe the numbers can work.”

She emphasized the importance of getting involved, individually and through community associations, to formulate concrete suggestions for improvements. “If people have an opinion on it, get involved. Show up at the consultations. Voice your opinion.”

The first city consultation will be a virtual citywide session on Thursday, June 20 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. It will give an overview of the main ideas of the proposed bylaw, include time for questions, and explain what will happen in future meetings.

You can register and get more information at [engage.ottawa.ca/zoning](https://engage.ottawa.ca/zoning)

## First chance to comment on zoning bylaw

Alayne McGregor

The City of Ottawa released the first draft of its new zoning bylaw May 31, the start of a process that’s expected to the last until the end of 2025.

The changes will bring the bylaw into accordance with the city’s Official Plan – and, more importantly, with changes required by the federal and provincial governments to increase housing availability.

Major changes include allowing four dwellings or more on each serviced residential lot, removing most residential parking requirements (except for visitor or handicapped spots), and allowing more retail and services near homes. Climate resiliency, including provisions for electric vehicle charging and encouraging tree retention and forest regeneration, is also emphasized.

Centretown Community Association President Mary Huang said the CCA had received

## Better amenities needed downtown: study

continued from page 1  
only support residents but also attract tourists and businesses, the plan says. Possibly referring to a hockey arena, it says that “major recreational and sporting facilities are also landmark buildings and tourism attractions with significant economic spin offs.”

Downtown’s public realm could be improved with small-scale “capital works” that are easily implementable, low-cost, scalable and all-seasons, and unique to downtown environments, it says, which could be done through design competitions and in partnership with universities. It recommends a design charette to explore a renewed vision and programming for the current main library building on Metcalfe Street to consider incubator

or cultural uses and create a “beacon” in the core.

A cultural and arts district including consistent wayfinding, branding and promotion is also part of the plan. Besides current city initiatives, it suggests recurring arts-related programs to bring people downtown off-hours and off-season, such as a late-evening “First Friday” or “Nuit Blanche” events, and building new outdoor performance infrastructure such as lighting, permanent stages, public restrooms, and beautification.

In order to fund these amenities, it asks the federal government to maintain its payments in lieu of taxes at the current level even with fewer government offices downtown. It also suggests using part of downtown parking revenue for public realm

improvements (not currently allowed), and dedicating one percent of the HST generated in downtown to downtown revitalization.

Centretown Community Association President Mary Huang, who had served on the revitalization task force, said her priority for downtown restoration was to convert at least one federal building into affordable housing.

Huang also liked the idea of a business incubation district that could create an ecosystem to support startups. She also suggested taking advantage of Ottawa’s bilingualism to make connections with European companies.

“We have a very highly skilled bilingual workforce. Let’s leverage that as much as we can.”

You can read the report at [livingcapitalottawa.ca](https://livingcapitalottawa.ca).



A rear view of one of the two Preston Street rigid bridges waiting to be moved. ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

will also be closed by continuing reconstruction work: Parkdale westbound off-ramp (June 16 to September 8), Rochester westbound on-ramp (June 19 to October 8),

Rochester westbound on-ramp (June 19 to October 8), O’Connor westbound on-ramp (July 2 to August 29), plus Lyon Street westbound on-ramp (until fall of 2025).

## Gladstone Xing, Rideau bridge almost ready

Alayne McGregor

Two long-awaited pedestrian/cycling facilities are almost ready to go, city staff announced to the Transit Commission May 31.

Workers are currently “getting prepared” for a new signalized pedestrian/cyclist crossing of Gladstone Avenue which will be installed at the Trillium Pathway and beside the new Corso Italia LRT station, staff told the commission. The crossing is

scheduled to be installed this summer.

Jacelyn Daigle, the city’s transit services manager of construction management, said they were “trying to work out conflicts between Hydro infrastructure and traffic signals infrastructure, but we’re working towards a solution so we can get that installed.”

And the Rideau River pedestrian/cycling bridge, from Carleton University to Vincent Massey Park, will final-

ly open on Saturday, June 15; it had been sitting for several years almost finished. The final work involved the approaches to the bridge such as railings and landscaping. Staff said that final stone facing on the underside of the bridge won’t be completed until later in 2024.

At the meeting, Councillor Riley Brockington plaintively asked, “Why are we waiting until every little grass seed is in the ground before we open this bridge?”



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## DCA report: AGM, Plouffe Park, affordable housing, replacing “Dalhousie”?



Previous presidents of the Dalhousie Community Association hold the 40th anniversary cake at the AGM: (l-r) David Seaborn, Peter Childs, Michael Powell, Archie Campbell, Carol Paschal, and current president Catherine Boucher in front. Each told the AGM about highlights of their term. *ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ*

Ed McKenna

### Dalhousie Community Association begins its fifth decade!

Following a successful annual general meeting on May 25, the Dalhousie Community Association entered its fifth decade on May 30 when the board held the first meeting of its new term of office.

First item on the agenda was the election of a new executive. Catherine Boucher (president), Ryan Turley (secretary), David Seaborn (treasurer), and I (Ed McKenna, vice-president), agreed to serve another year, and accordingly, were acclaimed.

The executive is part of a strong,

15-member board, which also includes Charles Akben-Marchand, Debbie Barton, Archie Campbell, Ida Henderson, Imran Kaderina, Jenna Moore, Sophie Orosz, Michael Powell, Lory Picheca, Sally Rutherford, and Amy Wong.

A reminder that board meetings, which take place via Zoom on the fourth Thursday of each month, are open to everyone. If you want to keep up with what's going on in the neighbourhood, please join us! Next meeting: Thursday, June 27, at 7:30 p.m.

### Councillor's report

A standing item on the DCA monthly board agenda is an informative report from

the office of Somerset Ward Councillor Ariel Troster. It's a chance to hear about current issues and ask questions about new ones.

This month the discussion included

- pedestrian safety at the intersection of Preston and Albert Streets;
- a new bike lane on Gladstone Avenue;
- preparations for Canada Day traffic;
- a major new housing development at 10 Empress Street; and
- the city's proposed new zoning bylaw.

### The Plan for Plouffe Park and 1010 Somerset

Plouffe Park, as everyone by now surely knows, is a big part of the city's development plans for 1010 Somerset Street West, the area bounded by Oak Street and Somerset, Preston, and LRT Line 2.

Yes, Plouffe Park has been saved, but questions persist about its fate in the larger development, and about the extent of the greenspace – significantly less than originally promised by the city – allocated to the community in the new “final” plan.

The DCA shared its concerns about the plan with the city and Councillor Troster in a meeting May 28. These include:

- the proposal to reduce the greenspace to about 1 hectare from the 1.5 hectares promised in the city's secondary plan;
- the location of a proposed district heating plant on the greenspace;
- the expansion of the area dedicated to private development; and
- the need to extend the parkland north to provide an inviting entry for pedestrians on busy Somerset Street.

As for Plouffe Park, the city proposes to use the west end of the park as a route for school buses, which is a safety concern. The DCA is also pressing for the reconstruction of the park to alleviate its chronic drainage issues (the park currently serves as a flood basin) before the construction of the new École élémentaire publique Louise-Arbour adjacent to the park. Hopefully Plouffe Park will host many of the 450 school children daily, but not if the surface is wet and muddy!

No date has been announced, but we heard in the councillor's report that the city will schedule a public meeting on the latest plan for 1010 Somerset early this summer.

### Good neighbour agreement

The DCA's Peaceable Neighbourhood Committee reported that discussions will continue this month with the Chinatown Business Improvement Association and the Somerset West Community Health Centre on the preparation of a Good Neighbour Agreement for the Dalhousie area.

The committee will recommend that the DCA become a signatory to the agreement, which it hopes will be ready for the board's consideration at our next meeting in June.

The agreement is to share information about safety issues as they arise. It sets out the parameters for information sharing and reporting, and is meant to ensure the BIA and

DCA have up-to-date information on programs and services from SWCHC to share with their members (businesses or residents).

### New housing proposed for Empress Street

The DCA has requested a public meeting to discuss a proposal for a new four-storey apartment building on Empress. The building will offer 41 dwelling units. And they will be affordable!

During the city's pre-consultation process a representative of the DCA had an opportunity to comment on this proposal, but these discussions were subject to a non-disclosure agreement. The city recently posted the proposal on its development application website, however, so now is the time to ensure the neighbourhood its fully aware of the plan.

This project is owned jointly by the Dalhousie Non-Profit Housing Co-operative and Henry Investments, whose signature project is the preservation of the Alexander Fleck House at the top of the escarpment at the corner of Laurier and Bronson, where it also plans to build a new condominium development. The neighbouring property on Laurier is owned by the housing co-operative.

### Does the DCA need a new name?

And speaking of the Dalhousie Non-Profit Housing Co-op, which shares the Dalhousie name with our community association (and with the Dalhousie Parents Daycare Centre, and Dalhousie South Park), the DCA board has agreed with the Messaging Out Committee that the time has come to consider alternatives to “Dalhousie.”

A special committee has been struck to bring recommendations for a new name back to the board. At the same time, a new logo for our community association is in the works.

You can read on our website ([ottawadalhousie.ca](http://ottawadalhousie.ca)) about why, after 40 years, the Dalhousie name persists.

### McCann Park

Another question: where is McCann Park?

It's on Norman Street, just east of Preston, and you can be excused for not knowing the answer because, as the Public Realm Committee reported, it's very tiny – a small “pocket park” – and often overlooked. It is, nevertheless, a welcome green urban oasis, and the committee was pleased to report that the city has prioritized McCann Park for renewal, likely in 2026.

The committee also reported on the success of the Mother's Day tree give-away organized by Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability (CAFES). A second part of the project will focus on trees for public spaces, and the committee will organize some tree replanting on the Somerset Viaduct later this month.

Please join the DCA board at our next regular meeting, on Thursday, June 27, at 7:30 p.m. (via Zoom).

Contact: [president@ottawadalhousie.ca](mailto:president@ottawadalhousie.ca), and visit our website: [ottawadalhousie.ca](http://ottawadalhousie.ca).

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# P4X wants more greenspace in 1010 Somerset plan; school council happy overall

Alayne McGregor

Still not enough greenspace. That's the reaction from community associations to the revised concept plan for the 1010 Somerset project.

They are calling for another revamp to reduce the footprint of city buildings in favour of more parkland and sports fields, which they say are highly needed in the area.

Since 2021, P4X (the Plouffe Park, Plant Pool Expansion Coalition) has been pushing for the best use of the limited space in this land. The coalition includes the Dalhousie (DCA) and Hintonburg Community Associations, the Plant Pool and Hintonburg Recreation Associations, and the Somerset West Community Health Centre.

P4X argues that Dalhousie (the western half of Somerset Ward) and Hintonburg are already seriously deficient in greenspace, outdoor and indoor recreation facilities, and public space for meetings and events, compared to city averages and standards.

The city guideline for parkland is two hectares per 1000 people. In Somerset Ward, it's currently only 0.54 ha/1000, and even less in Dalhousie, says coalition spokesperson David Seaborn – and that doesn't count the thousands of new residents expected in the Preston/Booth area in the next decade.

"Thus, theoretically, we should be adding 28 ha of new park." The total area of the 1010 Somerset project is only 2.54 ha.

Seaborn said more greenspace could be achieved by reducing the footprint of the proposed city recreation centre and having it serve local, rather than citywide, recreation needs. He also recommended reducing the footprint of the proposed residential towers.

He also suggested shifting the proposed mid-rise residential building to allow the new park to extend out to Somerset Street West

and to increase the park area. In the plan, the new park is isolated and invisible from the street: access is only a long narrow sidewalk beside a busy driveway.

Alternatively, the mid-rise residential building could be constructed on top of the recreation centre, or the southern extension of the "Future Residential Site" should be changed to park, he suggested.

The new park is actually not as big as claimed (one hectare), Seaborn says, because it is encumbered by a 3000 sq. ft. heating plant and also includes tiny strips of lawn as parkland. As well, "because the road shown traversing the west end of Plouffe Park is supposed to be located west of the west edge of Plouffe Park, the area of new park will actually be further reduced by the width of that road. So net new park is actually only 0.773 ha."

It's also inconsistent with the city's 2021 Corso Italia Secondary Plan, which specified a 1.5 ha addition to Plouffe Park running uninterrupted to the Trillium Path, he said.

The new French elementary school also interrupts the connection between the new park and the current Plouffe Park, Seaborn said, which could be a problem for parents supervising children. He wondered if the school could be sited closer to Oak Street in order to widen the woonerf/service lane north of the school.

P4X is also concerned that the new access lane to the school from Somerset to Oak will also "compromise the safety of children and other users moving from Plouffe Park to the new park. To have a school playground (which will use Plouffe Park) separated by moving buses at the very times that kids will be moving (across the bus lane) from school to playground is not a safe arrangement. Let's keep the buses on Oak Street."

## School Council response more positive

In contrast, the school council at École

Louise Arbour is happy overall with the revised plan. In an email to *The BUZZ*, four members of the school council executive committee said they welcomed the proposed location for the school.

"Placing the school on Oak Street will better integrate it in the neighbourhood, preserve Plouffe Park which the children will have further access to, and better connect to the new recreational complex and Plant Recreational Centre."

Concerned that more students will leave the school's current inadequate and overcrowded facilities, they said they hoped city council will approve the plan this year to keep the projected 2026-2027 school year timeline to open the new school on track.

"We feel this is a strong plan and are confident that any remaining concerns can be addressed during the design stage of the project. Given the extensive delays the project has already incurred, we hope the City will approve this plan quickly so that the CEPEO can start construction as soon as possible."

They're still looking for consultation on "the best possible solutions for access to greenspace (school yard), play structures, and privileged access to community resources

(recreation facility and Plant Recreation Centre). ... We would love to see some enclosed, dedicated space for school children in grade 1 to 6 with play structures - as it stands the only recess space for that age group would be in the Plouffe Park which is always publicly accessible.

"The French Catholic school in the same neighbourhood does use a public park (Hintonburg Park, which is enclosed by rock walls) as an extension of their school yard, but still has a sizable enclosed yard that is not accessible to the public during school hours. Community groups have also raised concerns about the quality of the field at Plouffe Park, which we understand needs to be upgraded to support additional use. We hope this is something the City will address proactively."

The school council also pointed to ongoing safety concerns over the proposed location for the bus lane and drop-off, "which would unnecessarily put children at risk as they would have to cross it to access greenspace/school yard."

"We would also love to see any efforts to preserve trees on the site, particularly the mature trees in Plouffe Park."

# New bonds to support affordable housing

Alayne McGregor

Want to support affordable rental housing? The Ottawa Community Land Trust (OCLT) has a deal for you.

The OCLT is selling "Housing Forever" bonds with the goal of raising \$1.7 million. Funds raised will repay loans it needed to buy its first acquisition (a six-unit apartment building at 887 Kirkwood), and allow it to buy two more properties this year.

The land trust is a non-profit which buys up rental units with the aim of ensuring that their rents stay affordable. Its aim is to pay its costs and generate some income to buy more buildings and development land for further affordable housing – as opposed to profit-generating real estate investment trusts (REITs).

"We know that the best way to guarantee long-term affordability is to remove these properties from the market and place them under community ownership," said OCLT Executive Director Mike Bulthuis.

It has also received Section 37 funds from the City of Ottawa to help it purchase the Kirkwood property, and sponsorships and grants from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Community Housing Transformation Centre, Catherine Donnelly Foundation, Community Services Recovery Fund, and Ottawa Community Foundation.

The bond campaign started on May 21, and two weeks in, it had \$600,000 in pledges from 36 investors, Bulthuis said, with several hundred thousand fully confirmed. The majority have been from individuals with a few from organizations. The campaign will continue until the full amount is raised which he

expected would take a few months.

Four types of bonds are available:

- three years at 3.5 percent with a minimum \$1000 investment
- five years at 4.0 percent with a minimum \$5000 investment
- seven years at 4.5 percent with a minimum \$50,000 investment
- three years at zero percent with a minimum \$500 investment

The bonds are not secured at the time of purchase, Bulthuis said, but will be registered against properties owned by the land trust. There is a trustee identified to represent the bondholders, he said.

Bulthuis said the campaign has introduced the land trust to people who know of properties for sale. The trust has also been working with brokers and realtors, who have identified several properties as possible acquisitions.

"I'm super confident that if the community really embraces this campaign and helps us develop this fund, as we're hoping, we'll be able to use those dollars pretty quickly and and preserve a couple of other properties."

The OCLT had put in an offer on a building a few months ago, but it fell through because it took too long to assemble financing. "At the end of the day, the seller wanted to move more quickly than that. So timelines are a challenge. And I think that's where these bonds are going to be helpful because they will potentially allow us to move more quickly."

He also hoped for help from the [recently announced federal Rental Protection Fund](#) to allow them to buy buildings with deeply affordable rents and rooming houses.

Full information is available at [www.oclt.ca/invest/](http://www.oclt.ca/invest/)

# School review shows diverse student needs

Alayne McGregor

The most obvious takeaway from a community meeting on possible changes to public elementary school programs: different children have very different needs.

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) organized the meeting May 22 to hear from parents and the public in Centretown about current elementary programs and whether they were meeting children's needs. 33 residents attended.

The OCDSB has started a comprehensive review of its elementary (JK-8) programs. Until the end of June it is asking for residents' comments and ideas; over the summer it will develop alternatives; and in the fall it will propose program changes with a decision to be made in December. Implementation is scheduled for fall 2025 and may be done gradually.

Ottawa has an unusually complex school structure. It has four school boards: English public (OCDSB), English Catholic, French public, and French Catholic. Under the OCDSB, elementary program streams include English with core French, early French immersion, middle French immersion, alternative, virtual, and special edu-

cation. Some schools have only one stream; some support two (i.e., immersion and English). Some special education students are completely or partially integrated into regular classrooms; some are in their own classes, either in dedicated or in regular schools.

One mother said that, on her street, students go to six different schools.

But the multiplicity of streams, plus the public/Catholic split, means that students at some schools have more options than at others, creating inequities.

It also means that many children live too far away from the school they attend to walk there. That means busing, and the cost of busing has substantially increased. The busing issue was only raised peripherally at the meeting, perhaps because Centretown is compact enough that most students can walk.

In a break-out group at the meeting, *The BUZZ* heard from parents and teachers. Despite the potentially emotionally explosive topic, the discussion was respectful and calm, with parents telling their children's experiences.

Some explained how essential it is for students to be bilingual to compete in the job market, making immersion a necessity. Others explained how immersion didn't work for their children. One talked about how her daughter thrived in an alternative school, after being stressed in immersion because she couldn't learn to read in French.

Parents with children in special education praised those programs. One said her son is happy in a small English special ed class but wouldn't function in a regular classroom.

There was general agreement in the group that students could not all be fitted into one mold.

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# Ottawa's Tulip Festival is an example of peace in the world



Above: In some beds of primarily one colour of tulip, you could see the odd highly contrasting flower. Right: The festival attracted many families.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

Stephen Thirlwall

When I visit the Canadian Tulip Festival each year, I increasingly observe the people as much as the flowers.

What I see are expressions of beauty, diversity, harmony, love, unity, peace, and freedom. Ottawa has truly become a community with people from all backgrounds around the world; more and more I see interracial and cross-cultural families and groups of friends.

Individuals, groups of friends, large extended families, school groups, young couples with new babies, elder seniors pushed in wheelchairs all attend the festival – with no signs of conflict. Even though everyone wants to get as close as possible to the flowers, they peek around one another or take turns. The freedom of choice in the range of colours and designs of their clothes match those of the flowers in the garden beds.

Our city and especially our downtown community need examples like this to counter what we continually hear in the interna-

tional and local news: accidents, violence, discrimination, opposition, protest, conflict, and outright war.

The festival started in 1953 as a result of Canada taking in Princess Juliana of the Netherlands and her two daughters while her country was occupied by Nazi Germany during World War II. Juliana had a third child while living in Ottawa, who was especially given Dutch citizenship. Canadian soldiers were seen as the main liberators of Holland. In honour of this, Princess Juliana gave gifts to Canada including many tulip bulbs.

The gift of tulips has continued over the years. Every year, new varieties of tulips appear, and new design schemes for displaying them have flourished.

The flower beds now serve as a reflection of the community that comes to see the exhibits. Some beds are primarily of one colour and design, but in their midst can be seen the odd appearance of highly contrasting tulips. Others are combinations of two, three or four different



sizes, colours and varieties of tulips showing the beauty, harmony, and balance of unity in diversity. Some beds also include the non-tulips such as narcissus and grape hyacinth.

Holding the festival in Commissioners Park at Dow's Lake provides a wide space for the crowds to move through, shaded overhung by large, gorgeous trees. There are pockets of people, especially family groups, picnicking, playing games, or relaxing on the

grass. Individuals sit meditating or reading. You can watch the dog walkers, bikers, and runners passing by along the lakeside. It's a very pastoral scene.

If we pay attention, we can see similar signs in the various festivals and neighbourhood events happening across the city. These help us to build hope – and serve as examples of harmony in the face of the many existing challenges and conflicts locally and in the world.

## MPP report: An historic day to reckon with the past

Joel Harden

On May 28, MPP Sol Mamakwa (Kiiwetinoong) addressed the House in Oji-Cree. He was the first elected member of provincial parliament to do so in Ontario's history.

In a passionate 10 minutes, Mamakwa reflected on how his capacity to speak Oji-Cree had diminished since being elected in 2018. He linked this to the fact that Indigenous languages do not enjoy official status in Ontario, like English and French. He said this was part of Ontario's colonial past and present.

Mamakwa talked about how children were once punished for speaking Indigenous languages in Ontario; this was something he experienced personally. In Indian residential schools, students would routinely have their mouths washed with soap if they were caught speaking Oji-Cree or other Indigenous languages.

But that day we forged a new path in a more hopeful direction.

It started with Mamakwa advocating on this matter with the Government House Leader Paul Calandra. He noted that Indigenous languages were not permitted to be spoken in the House without the unanimous consent of all Members.

At first, Calandra was surprised but later confirmed that Mamakwa was correct. And then he went a step further. "We will change this," Calandra said, "and I'll work with you to do so." Mamakwa then started organizing.

He set a date (May 28) for his historic speech, and invited Indigenous leaders and community members to Queen's Park to witness him address the House in Oji-Cree. May 28 was also his mother's (Kezia Mamakwa)

79th birthday, and she is a unilingual Oji-Cree speaker. She had taught her son Oji-Cree, and always urged him to be proud of his Indigenous roots.

That set the stage for the events of this week, and it's important to acknowledge it meant working across partisan lines. Mamakwa didn't wait for change to happen; full credit is due to him and Calandra for work on the government's side.

But Mamakwa wasn't satisfied with that. After his historic address, he pressed the government in Question Period on a promise it had made to residents of Sioux Lookout: for a long-term care home that was appropriate for Indigenous elders.

This time, Premier Ford rose to the occasion. He pledged to build the home and said Mamakwa would be invited to the opening ceremony. The two then met each other in the aisle between the two sides of the House and embraced.

Recalling all of this to CBC's Power and Politics, Mamakwa said he had "a good feeling." He recalled feeling like "shackles were released" during his speech, but initially it also felt like he was not following the rules. There's a lesson worth noting here.

Harmful traditions can linger, woven into the fabric of our lives so much they withstand scrutiny. It can take years to question them.

But this week, Mamakwa showed us that better is always possible. As I have heard him say many times, the biggest room in any home is the room for improvement.

The precedent is now set for every other elected legislature in Canada to defend Indigenous languages and ensure they can be spoken freely in debate. Let's ensure that happens soon.

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## Somerset Ward: community advocacy is helping to get 1010 Somerset right

Ariel Troster

When I was first elected as councillor for Somerset Ward in 2022, one of the first meetings I had was with city staff about a proposed new development on the land adjoining the Plant Recreation Centre in Little Italy.

At the time, I was vaguely aware that in 2021, the city had bought some land at 1010 Somerset from the federal government and that the plan was for affordable housing and an expansion of recreation facilities.

I soon learned that the city was able to buy the adjacent land at a huge discount by agreeing to a series of conditions set out by the federal government, including Indigenous presence on the site, particularly spaces for artists; 150 units of market housing and 150 non-profit/affordable apartments; and a district energy system to power the whole site. The city's secondary plan for the neighbourhood also calls for an extra hectare of parkland and the expansion of indoor recreation facilities.

In the year that followed the purchase, the Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario (the French public school board) entered into an agreement with the city to discuss building a new French elementary school on the site.

As you may have read, the students at École élémentaire publique Louise-Arbour are currently located in a building with terrible ventilation, lead in the pipes, and no library or yard. The parents of these students are understandably eager to get their kids into a healthier school environment and want to see the new school built as soon as realistically possible.

When the city released the first draft of a proposed site plan for the 1010 Somerset/Plant Bath development, the renderings plunked the school right in the middle of Plouffe Park – one of the only sports fields in a part of the city with the lowest proportion of greenspace in the National Capital Region. Plouffe Park has been around for 100 years and is a beloved space in our community – you only have to stop by the Plant Recreation Centre's lobby to take in photos from its century of community use.

Residents were understandably upset and the community association launched

a "Save Plouffe Park" campaign in an effort to see the plan changed to preserve the park and also double the greenspace on the site, as was promised in the Corso Italia Secondary Plan.

This created understandable tension between parents who want to see a school built immediately, and other residents who wanted to save the park. I took the position (along with Councillor Jeff Leiper) that it was unfair to pit a beloved park against a French language school. Our community needs both, and I was convinced that if we put our city's best minds together, we could come up with alternatives. Mayor Sutcliffe agreed and instructed staff to draw up a new plan to get the school out of the park.

After working through nearly 100 objections and technical conflicts, city staff have released a final site plan proposal for the project. The new plan preserves Plouffe Park, doubles the greenspace/ park facilities, places Louise-Arbour public school on Oak Street, and creates an internal connection for both the school and Plant Bath to a new state-of-the-art recreation centre.

I am confident that this configuration of the plan is the best one we are going to get that satisfies as many needs as possible. It is possible that the city over-committed when we bought the land from the federal government and again when we agreed to build a school as part of this development.

But the truth is, I don't think our community can afford to lose any of these elements. We need a new French public school, more gym space, affordable housing, and expanded parks. This new plan delivers on all of these commitments in what appears to be the only way that is technically feasible.

I genuinely appreciate all of the community engagement on this issue. It shows that citizen involvement makes city developments better.

And while this may be the final site plan, so many of the design details are not final and will be subject to – you guessed it – more community consultation. I know that Somerset Ward residents will continue to advocate to make this project better, and I look forward to our continued conversations.

*Ariel Troster is the city councillor for Somerset Ward.*

## OC Transpo gets below-average marks for service

Alayne McGregor

With transit cutbacks still scheduled for this fall, OC Transpo isn't getting good marks for its current service.

Overall satisfaction with transit remains about 45 percent based on monthly surveys of approximately 1,000 Ottawa residents, almost half of whom ride OC Transpo. It was below 40 percent last September.

When asked whether satisfaction would improve with the route changes next fall, Pat Scrimgeour, OC Transpo's director of transit customer systems and planning, told the city transit commission on May 31 that "it will depend on each person's new experience.

"I think those people who are able to

make use of (the new LRT) Line 2 and Line 4 will be happier because of the shorter travel time and the greater comfort. Those for whom bus routes work for them will like it better if they're making a trip within their community. Those who will have another transfer, their satisfaction might go down. Those who are forming their opinion based on reliability we expect that they will be more satisfied.

"But it will be a mixture, obviously, and it's really a reflection of each person's own expectation of what they're looking for in their transit system."

He said that OC Transpo's satisfaction levels were below those from surveys in other cities.

On an average weekday in April, 101 of 8,137 trips weren't delivered –

and the top three routes for cancellations all run in Centretown.

LRT Line 2 replacement buses came first with 136 trips (or 2.5 percent) cancelled; then route 11 with 124 cancellations (three percent); and then route 7 with 105 cancellations (2.4 percent). One-third of the cancellations were due to problems on-street (congestion, detours, closures); 38 percent to lack of operators; 23 percent to mechanical breakdowns; and five percent to no bus available.

Scrimgeour did not give statistics for on-time performance for frequent bus routes (like the 6, 7, or 11), but promised this for next meeting. For less-frequent buses, 22 percent arrived at stops more than one minute early or more than five minutes late.

## First person: whose stuff is this, anyway?

Marit Quist-Corbett

"No, no, don't take that!" I run along the sidewalk, huffing and puffing, trying to prevent the garbage collectors from taking a beautiful wooden shelf and throwing it in the back of the truck.

The garbage man, a giant with hands that could easily scoop me up and toss me onto the heap in the back of the truck, looks at me in dismay. He's just lobbed part of the shelf neatly into the truck and now wonders what to do. Should he take this lady seriously? Go to the effort of getting the damn thing back? It has landed all the way to the back, covered in other pieces of flotsam and jetsam – half-filled gardening pots, some lumber, ripped flooring and broken tiles. He doesn't want to, but I stand my ground.

"I have a friend coming to pick it up this afternoon. I promised it to her. She's counting on it."

His partner comes over and looks at me sceptically. "We've heard that story before" is written all over his face.

Finally, with a look of "be it on your head," the giant pulls out a handy retrieval tool. This makes me think I can't be the first one to claim an item back from the trash heap.

He reaches in and grabs the shelf. Without a word, he tosses it onto the sidewalk. I pick it up and thank him profusely.

Then, with a last warning, they're on their way.

"They better not call us back to come and pick it up later!"

"No, no," I assure them. "No way. My friend is coming."

It's a little white lie. There is no friend. No promise. No guarantee. I just can't let that beautiful piece of furniture go into the landfill.

Once I've reassembled the shelf, I take pictures. Back home, I put the photos on all the platforms I can think of that might result in a response. Freecycle, Buy Nothing groups, Kijiji Free. I implore people to come and pick it up. I text a few friends who I think might be interested. I ask at the Art House if they'd take it. Wouldn't it look just perfect in one of their rooms? And it's useful, too – they can store dishes in it or supplies.

In the following days, while watching the non-response, I think about the situation. About the stuff we buy and the stuff we are encouraged to buy even though we don't need it. I also think about that shelf, that really well-made shelf, solid wood, nicely finished joints. I compare it to the crap we see in today's home-furnishing stores, often made of plastics or particle board, cheaply nailed together.

I can understand that there always is an ebb and flow of taste, that we don't necessarily like what our parents or grandparents liked. However, has the relentless push to buy new things made us lose appreciation for quality in craftsmanship?

When I first moved into my Centretown apartment, I combed the Bank Street second-hand furniture stores and found a gorgeous walnut chest of drawers for \$45. It had been reduced from \$400 because no one wanted it.

Today, I often see lovely cabinets or heavy wooden tables on Freecycle. They stay there for months. No one seems to pick them up. Don't get me wrong, I understand. The people who could use this kind of thing are young people looking for a place to live, divvying up an apartment, so they can afford the exorbitant rent. Those people don't own cars, let alone a truck. They can't just pick up heavy pieces of furniture from the curb. Those people don't have time. They're too busy working three jobs, juggling schedules.

A few days later, I have occasion to view the other side of this weird coin we use as common currency now.

I'm looking for the Communauto car I reserved and find myself lost in the bowels of the World Exchange Plaza. The first challenge has been to get in. Most of the doors are barred. NO ACCESS, they proclaim. I pound on one of the doors and



The rescued wooden shelf.

MARIT QUIST-CORBETT/THE BUZZ

a lone cleaner gestures to keep rounding the building.

Eventually I find a door that gives to my pull. I'm in. I follow a series of corridors, expecting at every turn to find that I can't go further and can't go back. The fluorescent lighting, grey shiny paint, and anonymous doors make everything feel creepy. It's eerie to be in what seems to be a completely empty building on your own. Images of murder mystery series flash through my brain.

Swallowing fear, I take the elevator to the parking garage where I locate my temporary car. For the moment, I'm safe.

After I return the car, I once again have to negotiate the empty building. I wander through acres of empty office space, treading beautiful, gleaming floors. Coming down an escalator – how weird is it that it's working just for me – I find something surreal. There is a lovely curved couch, upholstered in soft velvet, placed in the middle of a vast space. It crosses my mind that someone might love to take a nap on that soft sofa, someone maybe sleeping outdoors in the entrance of this same building.

Unable to find an exit, I find a security guard who directs me to the one door I can use to escape into the street.

Again, I reflect on the incomprehensible distribution of goods in our world. Somehow, the notion has crept into our society that we should strive to possess more than we need.

Spend! We have to keep the economy going!

You already have....fill in the appropriate word – shoes, dishes, phone, coffee grinder? It's obsolete, the wrong colour, out of fashion! Throw it away and buy a new one!

Somehow, we've come to accept that having luxurious empty buildings with lovely couches, while throngs of our neighbours have no place to live, is the new reality.

Somehow, a beautiful wooden shelf sitting on the curb to go into the landfill is met with a mere shrug from the garbage collector.

Two days later, my faith in humanity is restored.

On Freecycle, I get a message from a woman who desperately wants the shelf. I promise to keep it for her until she can find a truck to pick it up.

The following day, my doorbell rings. On the porch are two young women. They point to a couple of chairs my neighbour has put at the curb.

"We're just checking – are they free?"

When we tell them that, yes, they are, the women are delighted. They load the chairs into their tiny car and drive off, smiling widely.



# What makes a landmark building? A new proposal for 267 O'Connor

Erwin Dreessen

On May 17, the city's Urban Design Review Panel examined a new – and very different – proposal for 267 O'Connor (between MacLaren and Gilmour Streets) which will replace the current Doctors' Building and its parking lot.

An earlier proposal from Taggart Realty had been presented to the panel in January 2021 and was severely criticized. Community members also panned that proposal, describing it as two utterly pedestrian square blocks, offering inadequate open space and meeting none of the criteria that would qualify it as a "Landmark Building" as required under Centretown's Secondary Plan.

This time, the panel saw a very different proposal, prepared by UNStudio, a major architecture firm headquartered in Amsterdam and with six other offices around the world. The local anchor is Hobin Architecture. The panel consisted of the same members as in 2021, chaired by David Leinster of The Planning Partnership in Toronto.

The proposal is still for two towers but they are somewhat differently oriented and have far more architectural expression. Most strikingly, the space between the towers would become an urban room, a four-season "Privately Owned Public Space" (POPS), glass-roofed and designed to catch the maximum amount of sun.

The development would create 40,000 m<sup>2</sup> of space, accommodating 442 residential units in the towers and a commercial and institutional space as part of the two-storey podium. The north and south towers would reach to the 28th and 25th level respectively. There would be 212 parking spots on three levels and a 1:1 ratio for bike parking.

The frontage on O'Connor was presented as responding to the heritage surroundings. Pictures of two heritage buildings were offered as examples. These were Cen-

treto buildings that – so Robert Smythe informed me – were demolished 50 to 60 years ago. The resemblance was rather difficult to see.

The adjacent former OBE building at 330 Gilmour, on the other hand, was also shown but there was no comment on how it blends in (it doesn't). Several panel members noted that the historic context has to be understood better. To their credit, city staff also asked the panel to "advise on how to improve the proposal's response to the surrounding heritage context."

### "Just too massive"

While recognizing the more interesting architecture, several panel members made the same comment they had made on the earlier iteration: it is just too massive for the context. Coming up to the property line on the east side in particular was frowned upon. Taggart's reply was that, in 10 to 15 years, there will be a dozen more high rises in this area, so these two will then not stick out so much.

Another common comment was that the institutional use, which would take up about a quarter of the podium space under the north tower, should be determined very soon because it may affect the design of the rest.

Exterior greenspace would be very minimal – too little relative to the interior open space, the panel chair felt. The renderings show some modest trees in front of the podium.

Scant attention was paid in the presentation, and none in the panel's comments, to sustainability criteria, even though this is a key element

of qualification as a landmark building. The development would enrol in the city's Better Buildings Ottawa program for benchmarking and auditing, and there were words about local sourcing of materials. The capacity for on-site renewable energy generation would be assessed. Clearly not a top-ranked consideration!

### "Or you could reduce the size of the towers above"

In final responses, the Taggart representatives mused aloud whether a four-storey podium would be acceptable so that the towers would feel less massive. To this one panel member replied: "Or you could reduce the size of the towers above!"

The detailed written comments from the panel will become available in a month or so.

The panel is an independent panel of volunteer design professionals who provide an objective peer review of projects within the city's Design Priority Areas (DPAs). The panel is part of the city's planning approval process and promotes design excellence.

The medical building is slated for demolition near the end of the year; the six maple trees along MacLaren will stay until development gets under way. By May 2025, a temporary POPS will be created at the corner of O'Connor and MacLaren. The existing parking lot will not be expanded. If the development has not reached the building permit stage by April 2027, then the POPS will have to be increased by 50 percent.

Read Erwin Dreessen on [erwindreessen.substack.com/](http://erwindreessen.substack.com/)



Above: The frontage of the podium facing O'Connor is intended to "speak" to the surrounding heritage context. Below: The space between the two towers would become a 4-season "Urban Room" with two skylights. (City of Ottawa Development Information files/UNStudio)

More illustrations can be found on the web version of this article at [centretownbuzz.ca](http://centretownbuzz.ca).



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# Skyline: Unbuilt office building plans morph into residential tower twins

Robert Smythe

Here's a twist on the office-to-residential story.

GWL Realty Advisors – the blue-chip, long-term property investment arm of Great West Life – has abandoned its previously approved, but still unbuilt, 20-year-old plans for a second office tower on its through-block (Slater to Laurier Avenue West) property, just east of Bank Street.

Instead, they are now proposing two apartment buildings where a grim public parking facility currently sits at the site's eastern flank. It will be a somewhat complicated process.

What's more interesting is the fact that this area has a rich development history going back more than 50 years. It's been, as one planning consultant once said, "in play" forever.

## A parking lot buying binge

Responding to the downtown business community's outcries for more customer

parking, the City of Ottawa Parking Authority purchased this wide swath of land for \$1.7 million in 1971. It then cleared away numerous older but interesting commercial and residential buildings. Within a few years, their parking lot buying binge would leave the city with more than half a dozen large new lots in the central area.

Two years later, the Authority was toying with the notion of hooking up with a developer, who would build the city an enclosed parking garage on the block (supposedly for free) while being granted massive development rights on top.

## An early P3

So the advent of "triple P" private-public-partnerships, now often seen by many as dubious arrangements, is not so fresh and new. Two competitors came forward.

Quoting *The Ottawa Journal* of February 1, 1973: "HIGH-RISE-ITIS SPREADS. Gradually Ottawa's blocks of small, squat buildings are being gobbled

up by soaring towers of glass and steel. One proposal for the doomed block at Laurier, Slater, O'Connor, Bank is from MerBan Capital Corp. Ltd of Toronto, who would like to build a three-tower apartment hotel, 18 storeys high with parking for 580 cars. And all for a modest \$9.5 million.

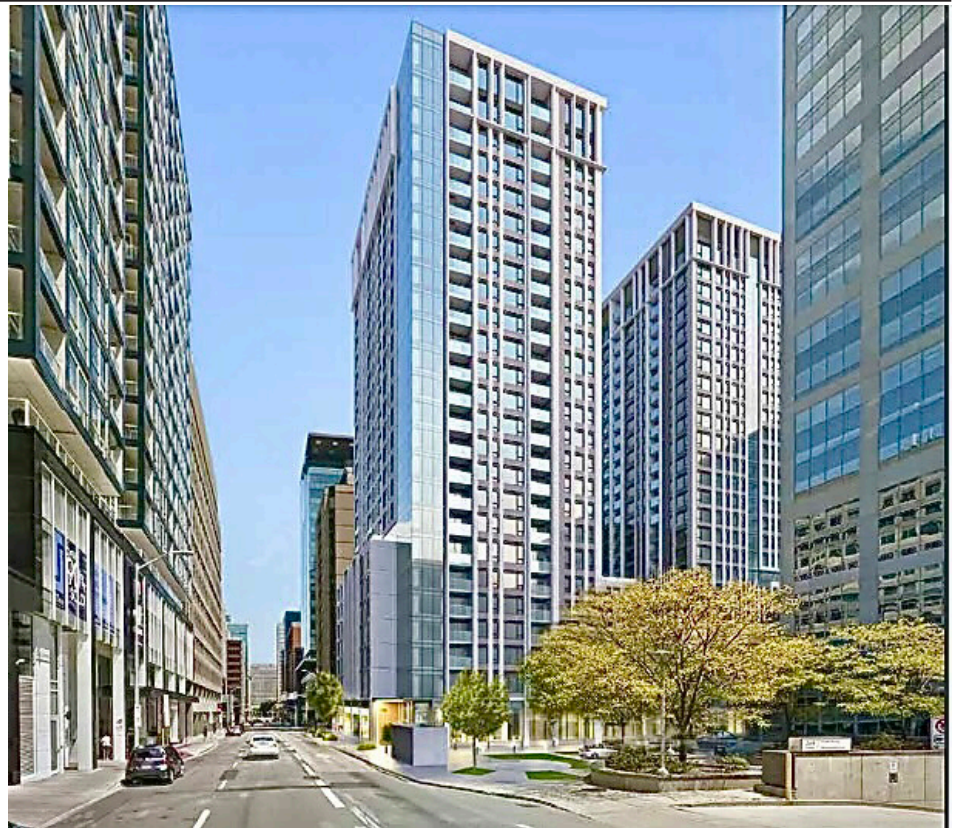
"Byward Holdings Ltd. and Ron Engineering Ltd. have a slightly less modest proposal. They want to build \$30 million twin office towers with parking for 800 cars and a shopping mall. The city's property department is studying both proposals and will report to the Board of Control by Feb. 20."

Ron Engineering's entry would be a stupendous scheme designed by modernist turned brutalist architect George Bemi, who imagined conjoined aggressively modelled towers inspired by the then avant-garde Japanese "Metabolist" style. It would also include that mall, enclosed parking with entrances from Slater, and a landscaped deck chock full of recreational diversions.

Their "Laurier-Slater-Center" came to naught, but Bemi was soon engaged to design the bunkerish former EDC Headquarters building at the O'Connor Street end of this block. Incidentally, that building was recently rejected by Montreal's Groupe Mach (the new owners of Place Bell Canada) for office-to-residential conversion. They deemed the project impossibly expensive and technically difficult.

The development concept was not forgotten. In the late 1970s, Olympia and York, the mighty international developers, pleased with the successful delivery of L'Esplanade Laurier, their white marble behemoth in the block to the south, announced the launch of something similar on the north side of Laurier Avenue.

They had asked to be considered should the first two plans fall through and had even begun to expand the project's potential by buying up some of the adjacent properties fronting Bank Street. This collapsed when O&Y turned its attention to more high-profile ventures, like east end London's Canary Wharf.



Above: Two residential towers will replace discarded plans for one office building. (City of Ottawa Development Information files/NEUF Architectes) Below: More than 50 years ago the ambitious LAURIER-SLATER-CENTER was proposed for this site. *Ottawa Journal*, February 1, 1973

After all of this, and apart from handsomely landscaped screening around its perimeter, the Laurier-Slater lot would remain a relatively undisturbed unit within the City of Ottawa's land portfolio until the turn of the last century.

## Amalgamation forced a sale

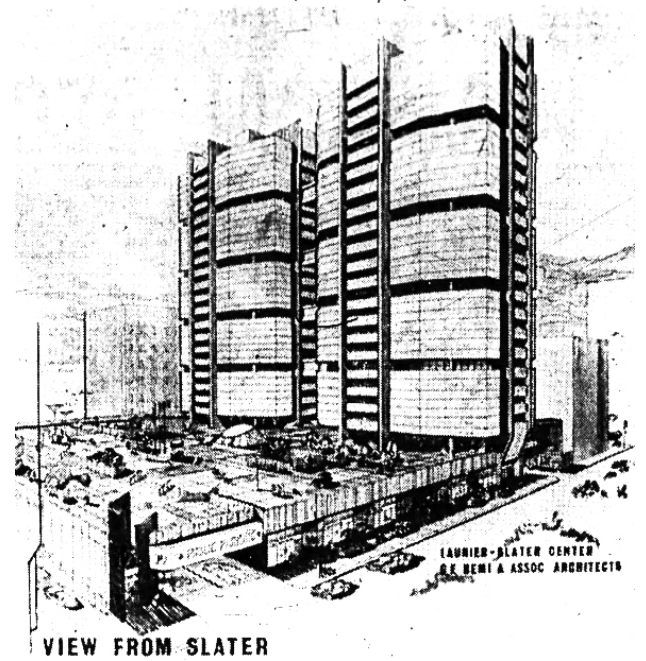
It was then that the spectre of regional municipal amalgamation, as decreed by the Government of Ontario, came to rear its head.

In order to bring cash to the merger with cities like Nepean (whose motto was "We are Debt Free"), Ottawa was forced to liquidate many of its most valuable assets like its new Moshe Safdie-designed building on Green Island plus valuable downtown parking lots. This one got swept up in the sell-off.

This land would be picked up by investors like Great West Life – which finally brings us to present day conditions. In 2003, GWL was granted approval for a two-tower office development, one on Laurier and the other facing Slater.

A fine plaza was promised at total completion, but they only proceeded with the very utilitarian 269 Laurier Avenue tower designed by architect David McRobie.

In the interim, adjacent to this a multi-level concrete parking structure to be operated by the City of Ottawa was constructed. Dry assembled with precast parts, it would be easily deconstructed and removed when the Slater tower was built. A



VIEW FROM SLATER

small but bleak surface parking lot filled out the block.

And there matters stood for more than 20 years.

## No date for the second stage

Their residential rejigging of the abandoned office concept is to be designed by NEUF Architectes. It will be another two-phase project, with the 25-storey Laurier Avenue West tower, a partial podium, and low-rise link building going first.

The second stage, 26 storeys on Slater, comes at an undetermined date in the future, leaving a vacant patch with a granular surface treatment (gravel?) that looks like it could be used for some surface parking.

As well, the parking lot connected to 269 Laurier continues unchanged – an obnoxious land use in an area with an LRT line running steps away.

The twin towers' appearance could best be described as anodyne, barely challenging the existing office building that started the original complex in 2003. But it certainly meets the city's stated desire and urgent need for more residential intensification downtown.

At its hearing on April 4, the city's Urban Design

Review Panel had plenty to say, but nothing of great import. It sought lighter colours, greater facade articulation such as more protruding fins, and perhaps a pointier crown. They even suggested picking up Art Deco details from the 1950s six-storey building down the block.

## Pedestrian through-block praised

Thirty-one comments in all, most notably against the surface parking. Praise for the pedestrian through-block connections although the one at the eastern boundary line is going to be occupied with enclosed dog runs for the residents. The developers took all of this under advisement.

The vital stats? 586 apartment units. 98 parking spaces for residents when the zoning bylaw requires none. 297 bike parking spaces – two more than dictated. Add to that 3,732 m<sup>2</sup> of amenity space, also more than the minimum amount required.

The site is currently zoned as a "mixed-use downtown zone" and with the relatively minor adjustments being sought it is likely to be readily approved.

Let's hope that it isn't bedevilled by the ghosts of schemes past.



The current grim precast parking garage. ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

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# What's on this month in Ottawa

Tony Wohlfarth

The Gladstone Theatre (910 Gladstone) was the place to be on June 1, as CKCU host Chris White welcomed David Whiteley and Steph Gallagher to introduce their plays, which open on October 16.



## National Film Board of Canada (NFB)

Last month, in celebration of Asian Heritage Month, the NFB released new films, including a short, animated film, *Boat People*. The film uses ants as a metaphor for the Vietnamese boat people, a group of refugees who escaped via the South China Sea. Running time: 10m. The film can be accessed at: [www.nfb.ca/film/boat-people/](http://www.nfb.ca/film/boat-people/)

## 20 Days in Mariupol

In 2021, *20 Days in Mariupol* captured the brutality of the Russian onslaught in Ukraine. (I reviewed the film in February 2022.) It went on to win an Academy Award for best documentary film in 2024 and is now available online at: [www.pbs.org/video/20-days-in-mariupol-x62itb/](http://www.pbs.org/video/20-days-in-mariupol-x62itb/)

## National Arts Centre (1 Elgin St.)

The National Arts Centre (NAC) stages come alive this month with:

- June 14: Bells Larsen;
- June 14-15: Lara Fabian;
- June 19-20: NAC Orchestra performs *Beethoven's Ninth*;
- June 25: The Korean National Orchestra;
- June 27: Miguel de Armas;
- July 1: NAC Orchestra's Canada Day Concert;
- July 9-10: Quique Escamilla; and
- July 13: Gilsons.

For tickets and show-times: [nac-cna.ca](http://nac-cna.ca)

## Ottawa Jazz Festival at NAC's Fourth Stage

The Ottawa Jazz Festival ([ottawajazzfestival.com/](http://ottawajazzfestival.com/)) takes over Confederation Park, Marion Dewar Plaza in front of City Hall and several stages at the NAC from June 21-30. Here are some of the best jazz performances:

- June 21: OCEANS and Tim Berne;
- June 22: Shabaka Hutchings;
- June 26: Petr Cancura;
- June 27: David Torn/Scott Amendola Duo;
- June 28: Marianne Trudel;
- June 29: Ches Smith, The Lionyls, and aja monet; and
- June 30: Lakecia Benjamin.

Also check out the festival's free outdoor day-time performances, with many of Ottawa's best jazz musicians, from vocals to big bands.

## Cinq à Sept

Every Thursday, from now until October, local and touring musicians will perform free outdoor concerts in the public plaza in front of 55 Byward Market Square from 5 to 7 p.m. Concerts may be cancelled due to bad weather. More info: [www.byward-market.com/events](http://www.byward-market.com/events)

## Ottawa Bagelshop Musicfest

Until August 11, the Ottawa Bagelshop will present local musicians in solo shows every Wednesday and Sunday at 2:30 p.m.

The series, at 1321 Wellington Street West, is free to attend, and features artists like singer/songwriter Miss McLeod, 2024 Juno nominated singer / songwriter Steph La

Rochelle, and country singer Nayana.

See [ottawabagelshop.com/pages/events](http://ottawabagelshop.com/pages/events) for the full lineup.

## Redbird Live (1165 Bank St.)

RBL also has an impressive range of live music this month:

- June 16: Roddy Ellias (a free show);
- June 28: Kristine St-Pierre;
- June 29: Michael Jerome Browne and Mary Flower; and
- July 4: Leeroy Stagger.

Tickets at: [www.redbirdlive.ca/](http://www.redbirdlive.ca/)

## Live on Elgin (220 Elgin St.)

- June 19: The Burning Tree with Crusade;
- July 3: Lawrence Maxwell with Oddeline.

Tickets and show-times: [liveonelgin.com](http://liveonelgin.com)

## Bytown Museum (1 Canal Lane)

*Capital Healers: Ottawa's Health Care Story*, a new exhibition about the history of Ottawa's health care and the training of its nurses, is a fascinating exhibit. It runs until April 6, 2025. (The museum has audio guides.) See: [www.bytownmuseum.com](http://www.bytownmuseum.com)



Nesa Azimi directed *Driver* (Norget Productions)

## Out of Town

The 32nd Toronto Jewish Film Festival (TJFF) wrapped up on June 9 with an animated film, *Where Is Anne Frank*. The film, directed by Ari Folman, dramatically tells the story of Anne Frank's family in hiding in Amsterdam and their capture by the Nazis. I had an opportunity to preview the film. It's a moving depiction of Anne Frank's story. To stream it: [www.tjff.com/films/where-is-anne-frank](http://www.tjff.com/films/where-is-anne-frank)

The Mariposa Folk Festival is an annual summer tradition in Orillia, Ontario. This year, it runs from July 5-7 and features an amazing array of musicians: Irish Mythen, William Prince, Amanda Rheaume, Old Crow Medicine Show and Donovan Woods. Tickets/information: [www.mariposafolk.com](http://www.mariposafolk.com)

The TriBeca Film Festival is underway in New York City. One of the highlights is the world premiere of *Driver*, directed by Nesa Azimi.

Desiree Wood is a 50-something long haul truck driver—one of a growing number of single women making their living as independent owner-operators. Her rig pulls a 53-foot trailer which also serves as her home. The scenery is one of the benefits of this occupation, and the camera work does a superb job of capturing it. I drive a lot on interstate highways, and many of the scenes are familiar, especially those in the truck stops where showers and a warm meal are available.

Desiree is also a survivor of domestic abuse and an advocate for other women as founder of a fledgling organization, Real Women in Trucking. Azimi and her crew were given full access to meetings and counselling sessions—one of many highlights of this extraordinary film. Running time: 1h27m.

*Tony Wohlfarth is an Ottawa-based freelance film and entertainment writer. He is covering Tribeca this month and Mariposa next month.*

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# Documentary shows the omnipresent danger of plastic pollution



Earth Week kicked off on April 21 with the March to end the Plastic Era along Wellington in front of Parliament Hill. Stuart Kinmond, a local artist, attended with his plastic dinosaur, *Plastisaurus Rex*. He was part of the parade, along with four pollbearers who carried the plastic dino. It's constructed from windshield washer fluid containers.

Dinah Robinson

“It was such an impactful film,” said artist and anti-single-use-plastics activist Stuart Kinmond after seeing *Plastic People* at its Ottawa premiere on Earth Day. “There was lots of new information on health aspects, not just pollution.”

The audience was abuzz with excitement by the end of the film. The production team and panel guests came on stage to a standing ovation.

*Plastic People* is a powerful new documentary about microplastics and its threat to our health and environment. The film argues that this pollution is insidious, hiding in plain sight, and must be brought out of the shadows.

Scientists are finding these micro-particles in our organs, blood, brain tissue, and even the placentas of new mothers. Microscopic particles of plastic drift in the air, water, and soil, becoming a permanent part of our environment.

“This is what an oil spill looks like in the human body,” said science journalist and co-director Ziya Tong during the panel discussion after the screening. Tong interviewed leading experts

and underwent experiments in her home and her body.

She teamed up on this film with Rick Smith, author of *Slow Death by Rubber Duck: How the Toxic Chemistry of Everyday Life Affects Our Health*.

“Microplastics are possibly the most serious type of pollutant our society has ever created. And now, we’re finding microplastics wherever we look in the human body. And once these tiny particles are in our bodies, they’re oozing their toxic ingredients on a minute-by-minute basis,” he says in the movie.

## It’s in the stars

Tong has been doing investigative scientific journalism for 17 years, and formerly co-hosted *The Daily Planet* TV show on Discovery Channel. She also wrote the book *The Reality Bubble*, which explores biological blind spots and invisible realities.

I asked Tong: how had the filmmakers brought hope to this overwhelming subject? “We recognized the paralysis around climate action and the timing aligned with the plastic treaty talks. And we knew how people needed motivation.

“All of the key partners

on the film are doing great work and they’re doing it quite visibly but we need collective action [to counter the growing tidal wave of plastic waste]. There are literally multiple (Mount) Everests of plastic pollution all over the earth.”

There were some big obstacles. Tong told us, “When I was working with *Daily Planet*, there was research underway on the impact of plastics on the brain and no one wanted to say anything. Researchers were being harassed.” Whistleblowers were fired and targeted with violence.

## Timing of the essence

In April, global leaders met in Ottawa for talks on how to stop plastic pollution. It was the fourth meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4) to develop a treaty. Policy changes focused on eliminating plastic at the source are key. UN Environment Assembly representatives committed to developing a legally binding treaty to end plastic pollution by the end of 2024.

The film strategically arrived at a crucial moment in the global debate on how to solve the plastic pollu-

tion crisis. The treaty will be the most significant agreement on environmental action since the Paris climate change accord.

Oil companies are facing the reality of reduced fossil fuel use, and looking for options to sustain profitability. “They have a motivation to increase the plasticization of human life,” says Smith. They are talking about tripling the production of plastic over the next two decades.

We asked Kinmond about the treaty talks. “Big oil and big plastic completely scuttled the talks. No agreement will be achieved on the aspect of production caps. These companies could be investing in renewable energy sources. It’s an example of a corporate decision to do plastic instead of something else.”

Huge challenges still exist with the proposal to reduce plastic production by 40 percent by 2040. Without a cap, production will triple. That’s a massive disparity.

## Health, not wellness

A new study has shown that nanoplastics can induce changes in the brain as seen in Parkinson’s and dementia cases. Researchers from the University of Rhode Island linked microplastic exposure to increased anxiety and decreased mental acuity in older test subjects. These new behaviours exhibited by the tested mice are similar to people diagnosed with dementia. A mere three weeks of exposure was enough to harm the mice.

Plastic is unavoidable, but it hasn’t always been like this. The petrochemical and fossil fuel industries have convinced us that plastic is necessary to function, that we need it everywhere, and that it doesn’t harm us. Studies have proven otherwise. The results show the need for further monitoring. The downstream costs of all the potential diseases will be unaffordable. Diseases like dementia can lead to huge health care costs for the individual and the tax-funded health care system.

We can’t escape from exposure to toxic chemicals from plastic. More than 16,000 chemicals are used to produce it and half have never been tested for human safety. Many are known to cause infertility, cancer, cognitive disorders and autoimmune diseases.

## Breaking it down

Microplastics are defined as plastic particles that are less than 5mm in length, though the key ones may be microscopic. These tiny bits of plastic have invaded our food, our water, our air, and our bodies. Researchers found tiny particles in the

blood of most adults tested. It is of particular concern that nanoplastics are so tiny they can cross the protective blood-brain barrier and enter individual neurons.

Only nine percent of all “recyclable” plastics are actually recycled. The other 91 percent end up in landfill, rivers, oceans, soil, air, fish, birds, humans, everywhere. It’s become invisible pollution.

Recycled plastic has a shorter life span. Plastics recycling also produces high GHGs. It’s all just a distraction from banning plastic production. Recycled plastics are still combined with virgin plastics to help maintain their flexibility.

“It should be called down-cycling not recycling,” said Kinmond.

Currently, 1.5 billion plastic water bottles are bought every day. The top three companies contributing to plastic waste are Pepsi, Coca-Cola, and Nestle, based on 2018-2022 data. “We need to go back to the things that lasted, like what we found in our grandmother’s home where glass and metal were used, along with dish soap instead of disposables,” said Tong.

## Where is it hiding?

The clothing industry is one of the worst polluters. A whopping 70 percent of the billions of pieces of clothes being made each year are made of or include some form of plastic. There’s also the plastic packaging the items are shipped in, plastic tags, labels and sometimes plastic bags at the check-out.

From fleece to polyester to nylon, our clothing is releasing harmful microplastics into the environment. It turns out washing and drying are the biggest contributors to the breakdown. Home laundry is responsible for 35 percent of the microplastics in the ocean.

You can make a difference by washing on the gentle cycle and hanging your clothes to dry to reduce the shedding of microplastics. You can also avoid purchasing plastic fabrics and support the second-hand in-

dustry in the future. Plastic clothes have a shorter life span, are more frequently disposed of and contributing to our overflowing landfills.

“One of the problems is we buy too much and it breaks too easily. By having less stuff, we will be on our way to producing less garbage,” Tong said.

## Double-double food waste

Our food supply requires plastic packaging as a preservation method. Food waste is another big contributor to plastic production. Plastic protects against moisture loss but it isn’t needed for all foods.

Field cucumbers (used for pickling) have a thicker skin which protects them naturally against moisture loss. English cucumbers – usually sold wrapped in plastic – do not have a very thick skin. They lose moisture more rapidly leading to more waste.

One easy way to avoid less packaging is shopping local. There’s less packaging and less shipping so the overall “Farm-to-Table” impact of your food choices is lower.

“It’s not about blaming the users. It’s a systemic problem, industry-driven. Fossil fuel companies have been lying to the public for years about the negative impacts of plastics,” Tong clarified. Plastic packaging to ship plastic products is an industry choice.

## Finding alternatives

The Ottawa Hospital is trying to make progress and striving for net zero. Exam table wraps used to have a plasticized paper and something recyclable is used now. Blue gown patient wraps used to contain propylene; a greener product has been sourced. Single-use plastic trays have been replaced with metal, now having a thousand uses. They even come in paper instead of plastic packages too. They searched for other options and found some – which the industry should be doing as well.

## Canadian in(-)action

On April 25, a First Nation continued on page 15 “Cities”



Ziya Tong in a scene from *Plastic People*.



# CCA report: Elgin St. market opens, fixing Kent Street, designing better high rises



Nat's Bread will return to the Elgin Street Market this year. Jack Hanna

ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

## Elgin Street Market open every Sunday

The Elgin Street Market is on in Boushey Square (Elgin at Waverley) each Sunday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

On offer are vegetables (organic and not); seasonal fruit; baking; artisanal breads; pickles; grab-and-go meals; take-home dinners; great coffee; and much more. The market, now in its fourth season, will run to October 13.

## Yoga in Jack Purcell Park on Sundays

There's a yoga session in Jack Purcell Park from 10 to 11 a.m. each Sunday throughout the summer.

It is by donation; \$5 is recommended.

## ...and tai chi

There is a tai chi session in Jack Purcell Park each Sunday from 11 a.m. to noon throughout the summer. It is by donation.

## Meet community groups at the market

Various community groups will have displays and staff at the community table at the Elgin Street Market (Elgin at Waverley) each Sunday. Featured groups over the coming weeks include:

- June 16 - Master Gardeners of Ottawa
- June 30 - Dalhousie Community Cupboard
- July 7 - Ecology Ottawa
- July 14 - children's author Maria Habanikova, author of *The Flying Whale*

## Design better skyscrapers

The CCA has numerous recommendations to improve the design of a pair of skyscrapers proposed for downtown Ottawa.

The pair of towers would go up on a lot just east of Bank, with a 26-storey tower facing Laurier and a 25-storey edifice facing Slater.

In a letter to the city's planning staff, the CCA recommends the buildings be sustainable, employing heat pumps or electrical heating.

The community association pointed out that the space provided for parking bicycles is woefully inadequate and urged the developer

to significantly increase it. The building is right beside the crosstown Laurier bike lanes.

It also suggested the developer provide affordable housing by taking advantage of government programs that provide financial incentives.

As well, the CCA urged the developer to help foster a walkable, 15-minute community by finding retail and commercial tenants who will serve the needs of those living in the neighbourhood: in particular, medical services, food retailers, and a hardware store.

(Read Robert Smythe's story about this development - p. 12 of this issue of *The BUZZ*.)

## Fix Kent Street

Kent Street will be a top priority of the CCA's Transportation Committee over the coming year.

The group is applying to "adopt" the traffic artery, which means CCA volunteers will do a clean-up along Kent twice a year.

But in addition, the CCA will focus on advocating for improvements to make Kent more human-friendly, such as traffic calming to lower speeds, protected bike lanes, and wider sidewalks.

# MP report: Pharmacare, basketball for Christie Lake, tree give-away, Parkdale's 100th

Yasir Naqvi

Spring has sprung in Ottawa! As the warm weather approaches and the school year comes to a close, I want to share with you some of the important work I have been doing in our community.

In the House of Commons, I have been working closely with my colleague, Minister Mark Holland, on the new Canadian Pharmacare Plan. I have heard from many constituents about how important universal access to contraception is and how this

legislation will impact them.

Once passed, our plan will provide universal and free access to diabetes medications and contraception to Canadians. This is a great first step in ensuring Canadians can access the medications they need without needing to worry about the cost.

## Parliamentary Basketball

Locally, I was also pleased to join Christie Lake Kids and participate in their 12th annual Parliamentary Basketball Game. I was joined by fellow MPs Alex

Ruff and Lori Idlout, and many of the talented staff that work on Parliament Hill. Christie Lake Kids was able to raise over \$20,000 from the event, which will help support their STAR program. This initiative provides youth in our communities with free after-school sport and recreation programming.

## Mother's Day trees

Our office's second annual Mother's Day tree give-away was a great success. Partnering with CAFES Ottawa and volunteers from the

Mechanicsville Community Association, we gave out trees to members of our community to plant for Mother's Day weekend.

This initiative started as part of my 2021 election promise to help improve our urban tree canopy. By planting more trees in our downtown core we can improve the air quality and provide shade to cool our city in the summer months.

So far we have helped plant over 150 trees through this event and I am already looking forward to increas-

ing this number next spring. Thank you to all of the volunteers who made this event possible. I look forward to our public planting event coming soon.

I was pleased to attend the opening of Parkdale Public Market's 100th season. As the second oldest market in Ottawa (established in July 1924), it has become a staple attraction of the spring and summer. It offers fresh produce, artisanal goods, plants, and more. The mar-

ket runs seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., May through October.

My community office is always open and is here to help! Whether it be a request for assistance with federal issues, or you are looking for community supports and resources, my team and I are here to support you.

If you have questions or comments or are looking for assistance, please get in touch with me, I would be pleased to hear from you.

# Cities can take real action to reduce plastic pollution

continued from page 14

in Sarnia declared a state of emergency over benzene discharge from INEOS Styrolution, a plastics chemical plant located across the road from the band office. Several people had fallen ill and benzene is a carcinogen associated with leukemia. INEOS temporarily shut down to address a mechanical issue.

Meanwhile, without a treaty, two Canadian cities are taking action. In Banff, Alberta, they've started with restaurant takeout containers. Customers have to bring their own or restaurants must have reusable and returnable containers. Bayfield, Ontario, became the first plastic-free community in North America.

## Action in Ottawa

Centretown Community Association (CCA) activity on plastic pollution began in 2019 with the formation of a working group mandated to get a ban on single-use plastic bags in Ottawa. Kinmond and Barbara Sibbald co-chaired the group.

They ran a "Plastic Bags; Break the Habit" poster campaign in Jan 2020. Business in Centretown were asked to put them in store windows. They had an information table and conducted a survey that revealed almost 50 percent of shoppers were already using reusable bags.

Many CAs pressured the city to ban single-use bags. Some tried to stop doggy bags with any type of plastic bag from entering our municipal composting system. At the time, Councillor Shawn

Menard said it would get evaluated as part of the Solid Waste Master Plan review process that was already underway and is still not finalized. It's on the legislative agenda this year.

"There are lots of issues still on the table. Microplastics did not get much attention at the conference," Kinmond said, when asked for his thoughts, post-treaty talks. At the end of the conference, Federal Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault stated that we have to start to do the things we can do without a treaty.

That means, over to you, City of Ottawa and Canadian residents - for real action on plastic pollution in 2024.

What can we do now? "We need to break it into smaller pieces so people can deal with it and understand," Kinmond said. "There are so many quick wins that the city could do but years go by without action."

Meanwhile, people are currently hoping more multi-unit dwellings will voluntarily opt into the green bin program. The city promotes the use of plastic bags to collect dog waste and combat the yuck factor, but doesn't explain the downside: that more plastic bags are going to landfill and the compost has microplastics.

The city says that both plastic and compostable bags are separated from the organic waste and sent to the landfill.

Waste Watch Ottawa (WWO) representative Duncan Burry told *The BUZZ*, "The sad reality is that so-called biodegradable or compostable plastic bags

are not guaranteed to break down in a conventional aerobic composting system such as we have in Ottawa. The time of the composting process (approx. 3 weeks) is insufficient to meet the bio-degradable criteria (approx. 12 weeks)."

Brian Tansey, also of WWO, told us, "The city had to downgrade the official quality rating for the resulting compost that comes out of the facility on Hawthorne Road, in order to comply with a new provincial standard." The level of contamination in Ottawa's compost is very high at around 30 percent. It is clearly best not to use any plastics at all.

## Seed of Hope

Plastic People is developing a campaign to further the impact of the film. Its website ([plasticpeople.doc.com/](http://plasticpeople.doc.com/)) has resources on how to have an impact, how to mobilize at any level, and toolkits to help project efforts.

This fall, they are going on an educational tour talking to students about the urgency of action. "Young people are rising up again, just like the '60s," Tong said.

There will also be further screenings of the film in Ottawa, organized by community and student associations.

Tong told us her personal mission is to reveal the truth, awaken curiosity and hopefully create a better world, and has been approached to work on two other films. "I've learned that the film arena is a place where you can speak the truth."



## What does HIV mean to you?

People can live long and healthy lives with HIV. Some of us know this well and some of us still have a lot to learn about what it means to live with HIV!

June 27th is **National HIV Testing Day** and can be a great reminder to get tested! It's important to keep tabs on your status if you may have been exposed to HIV through sex or sharing equipment for injection.

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WED JUNE 12	SACHI GHALIB ZEELLE	WED JULY 17	ALEX GOUPIL GRFN
SUN JUNE 16	MICHAEL BEN-SHALOM ALMYR JULES	SUN JULY 21	ALLIE GOODYEAR ABBY MBOQUET
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